

1) **Early Ten Mile Creek**, along with Five Mile Creek to the northeast, form the headwaters of the North Fork of the St. Lucie River, an Outstanding Waterway. These headwaters were originally comprised of a large area of interconnected marsh that eventually formed a creek. This marsh system, in times of high water, connected with the St. Johns River, allowing native peoples to travel.



The ground you are now standing on and the surrounding area have seen their share of history. Waterways such as this were extremely important for early peoples, providing food, water, and means of transport. It is estimated that this area was inhabited as early as 3000 to 750 BC. The native peoples that lived in this area were most likely Santa Luce (Guacata) Indians; they lived on the St. Lucie River and camped farther inland than most of the coast peoples such as the Ais Indians. The culture itself is classified as “East Okeechobee”, and is transitional, showing influences from neighboring cultures. These include Glades ceramics from the south, Belle Glades from the west, Orange and St. Johns from the north, and shell tool types from the north and south.

2) **Water hickory** - *Carya aquatica* - Native peoples used wood from *Carya* to make baskets, bows and arrows, blow gun darts, and tool handles. The swollen buttress, or base of this tree provides support; it is thought that its size is related to water levels. The 4-angled nut is bitter tasting, but has been reported to have been eaten by various native tribes around the country.



3) **South FL Slash Pine** - *Pinus elliottii* var. *densa* - This tree that characterizes upland habitats such as pine flatwoods, is typically not found in wetland habitats like this site. It most likely arrived as a result of the Creek being dredged, which resulted in a higher bank and an altered hydrology. The neighboring Glades culture ate the inner bark and roasted seeds as famine food. The needles were cooked or eaten raw. They used sap as a salve and an adhesive, with the Seminoles using it for arrow point glue. The wood of Slash Pines were used for bows, arrows and to make baskets. The Mikasuki and Creek name for this tree translates to “where the little people live”. Slash Pine was very important to early settlers for its wood, and sap for turpentine.



4) **Archaeology of the Area** - An archaeological dig that occurred while building the stormwater attenuation facility just south of this site revealed four distinct prehistoric sites with artifacts 2-4 thousand years old. Ceramics were found in an unusually high concentration, along with stone tool materials which are an uncommon find in south Florida.



Various tools were also found during the dig, including “chert” flakes and points. Chert is an impure form of flint stone used to make projectile points such as arrowheads. It is interesting to note that no chert outcrops exist in the area for making stone tools of this kind; it is thought that the native people traded for this chert that originally came from the Peace River region on the southwest coast of Florida. Tool making was mostly men’s work, while pottery was usually made by the women.



Prehistoric shark teeth were also recovered, which implies these peoples had ocean-going canoes, or traded with others who did. Great whites were often found offshore in Florida’s waters as they preyed on the now extinct Caribbean Monk Seal and a plentiful supply of sea turtles. Shark teeth made excellent tools for cutting and carving.



White-tailed Deer were an important resource for native people. These animals provided more meat per individual than almost any other food source. Hides provided clothing, bedding and other items. The sinew was used for creating tools and the sewing of clothing. Antlers were used as a soft hammer to make stone tools. Contents of the middens, or trash heaps, included not only deer but also rodents, birds, softshell and mud turtles, snakes, fish including sunfish, gar, catfish and mullet, and bull and great white sharks.

●Ceramic net weights were found along with Black Drum and Sheepshead remains. It is thought that fish could have been brought with nets directly onto the site, all the way from the Indian River Lagoon. Proposed sea level rises between 300 and 600 AD could have brought estuarine species closer to this area. However, radiocarbon dates suggest this area was not inhabited between 60 - 690 AD .

5) **False / Bastard Indigo** - *Amorpha fruticosa* - This plant has purple flowers that have been used to create a dye, but is considered inferior to “true” indigo. Indigo (blue) is an important color to many native cultures as it signifies the color of the sky. While it was mostly used for dyeing purposes, the Seminoles also used it for “moving sickness” and in birth ceremonies.



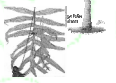
6) **Marlberry** - *Ardisia escallonioides* - This plant produces edible berries that were eaten by many native peoples, and the wood was used to make arrows and sticks for roasting meat. Several tribes mixed the leaves of this plant with tobacco to season or extend it. The name “marl” is thought to be a contraction of the word “marvel” or “marble” berry, as this plant is not usually found in marl or limestone based soils.



7) **Cabbage / Sabal Palm** - *Sabal palmetto* -This state tree of Florida is characteristic of hydric hammock ecosystems.



Golden Polypody Fern - *Phlebodium aureum* - Is also known as cabbage palm fern as it is often found growing in the nutrient rich nooks created by palm “boots”. These boots serve as a microhabitat for many plants and animals. This fern has been reported in indigenous and pioneer literature as being a treatment for ill babies.



8) **Spoil Bank** - The first white settlers were documented along the Creek in the 1800’s. In Sept 1878, the banks of the Creek overflowed. According to early settler Emily Lagow Bell, “The gale lasted 24 hours, the Creek began to rise, and the men had to get something to save the women and children. So they took the floor out of the house, made a raft, and then the water was in the house. The women and children were taken first to an Indian mound near the Creek. Several trips had to be made; a forgotten horse drowned in the yard. Cattle, hogs, deer, snakes, raccoons, opossums, and turkeys all took refuge on the mound, but hundreds of stock and animals drowned.” As a result of the flooding, the Creek was dredged in the early 1900’s by the newly formed Board of Drainage Commissioners to drain low lying areas. A coal-powered dredge created banks that would help prevent water from flooding homes and allowed for easier navigation. River channels were filled to provide additional cropland. Parts of the dredge are still buried in the Creek’s waters. As a result, the trail you’re walking on isn’t naturally “hilly”, but is the result of this dredging and piling of spoil onto the banks.



9) **Live Oak** - *Quercus virginiana* - Is a slow growing, but very long lived tree that produces acorns which are valuable to wildlife. Native peoples ate the acorns of many oak species, and used their oil for cooking and flavoring other foods. Many epiphytes such as airplants, orchids, and ferns can be found growing on its branches.

Resurrection Fern - *Pleopeltis polypodioides* - Is appropriately named as the leathery leaves curl up when dry and appear dead. Once it rains, the leaves reopen and appear “resurrected”. Can you tell if they have had rain recently?



10) **Wild Coffee** - *Psychotria nervosa* - One of two species of wild coffee, this understory plant is common in hammocks produces an edible red berry. A coffee substitute can be made from the berries, although its been reported that the taste is quite bitter and leaves the user with a headache.



11. **Wax Myrtle** - *Myrica cerifera* -This plant was one of just a few plant species found in the archaeological dig. Many native peoples used wax myrtle as a fever reducer, to treat headaches and stomach-aches, as an emetic, and to treat intestinal worms. Seminoles made lye soap from it and smoked the dried leaves as tobacco substitute. The AIS Indians burned it and early settlers planted it around their homes to keep mosquitoes at bay.



12) **Ten Mile Creek “of Today”**- Restoration efforts are underway to restore the Creek and parts of the St. Lucie River to more of its historic and natural course. Natural “oxbows”, or meanderings, are being reconnected to allow for greater water detention, which reduces flow velocities and improves filtration. This will result in greater water clarity, reduced suspended solids, nutrients, heavy metals and other pollutants to downstream waters. The above picture shows the original watercourse overlaying the current and much straighter watercourse for this area of the Creek.

The Stormwater Attenuation Facility built by the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) as part of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) just south of this site will allow for greater stormwater retention. Rainy summer months cause large amounts of stormwater to flow into the estuary from the Ten Mile Creek basin, decreasing the water's salt concentration, while dry winter months cause a higher than normal salinity level. Increased stormwater can also carry undesirable amounts of sediments and nutrients washed from urban and agricultural lands. This facility consists of an above-ground reservoir, pump stations, a 100-acre stormwater treatment area, and a control structure for discharges from the treatment area back to Ten Mile Creek to supplement agricultural demands during the dry season.

Lands along Ten Mile Creek and St. Lucie River are also being restored to the vegetation that existed historically. Over 2,000 acres of land have been preserved by St. Lucie County, SFWMD and FL Dept. of Environmental Protection (FDEP). As Ten Mile Creek contributes the second largest volume of water to the St. Lucie Estuary and drains an area about 90 square miles, we should all take extra precautions how we treat the land. What happens to the land ultimately happens to the water; what occurs at Ten Mile Creek trickles downstream to the St. Lucie River, the St. Lucie Estuary, the Indian River Lagoon, and ultimately, the Atlantic Ocean. You can do your part in helping to restore these waterways by treading lightly on the land, as we all live downstream from someone else.

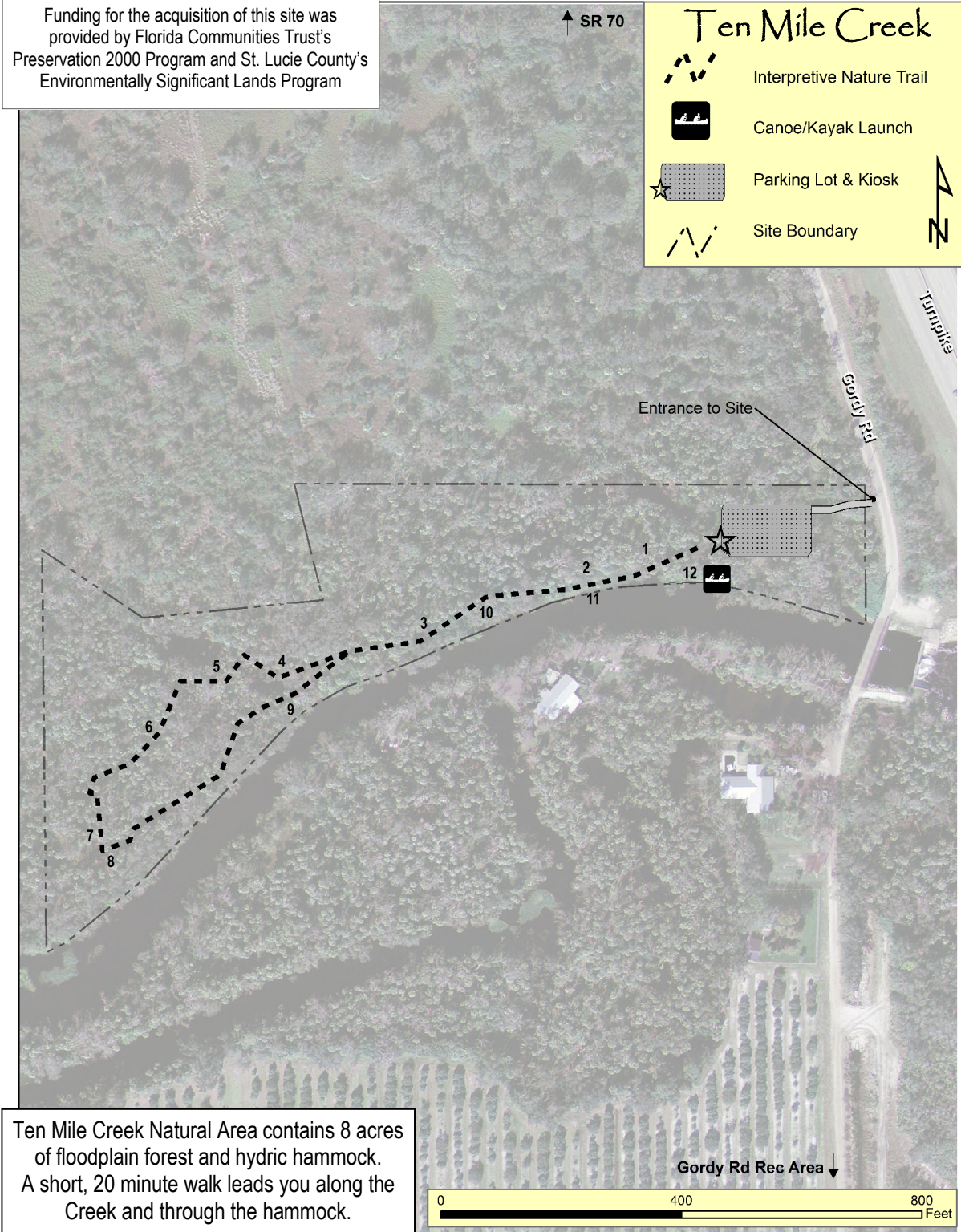


Ten Mile Creek Natural Area is an 8 acre site located on Gordy Rd., 0.8 miles south of S.R. 70.

Guidelines and Safety Information:

- Be cautious of uneven trail surfaces.
- Please remain on the trails.
- Carry adequate drinking water.
- In case of lightning, seek a low area away from trees, fence lines and tall objects.
- In case of emergency, call 911.
- While hiking the trail you may encounter animals indigenous to this area. Please observe from a safe distance.
- Leave all plant life intact.
- Please leave site cleaner than you found it. "Pack it in, pack it out."
- If paddling, bring & use safety gear.
- Use at own risk.

To learn more about St. Lucie County's natural heritage, there are more than 20 self-guiding interpretive trails located within the Natural Areas/Preserves. Each trail describes the most common plants, as well as significant geographical and historical features of the site.



Ten Mile Creek

Natural Area



Interpretive Trail



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Environmental Resources
Department**
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http://www.stlucieco.gov/erd/environmental_lands.htm

Gates Open: Sunrise to Sunset